DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 113 695 CS 002 199

AUTHOR Mountain, Lee
TITLE How Parents Are Teaching Their Preschoolers to Read.
INSTITUTION Florida State Dept. of Education, Tallahassee.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 13p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document due to colored paper

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Reading; *Parent Role; Phonics; *Preschool Education; Reading Development; *Reading Games; Vocabulary Development; *Word Recognition

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet suggests methods of teaching beginning reading using word cards, stories written by a parent, and phonics games. Activities using word cards include writing the name of a person or object on the card and helping the child associate that card directly with the person or object. Stories written by parents usually feature the children and relatives or friends of the children. Only a minimal vocabulary of nouns and action verbs was necessary in understanding these stories. Phonics games attempt to associate letters with their sounds and can be played with word cards and stories. (LL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED113695

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HOW PARENTS ARE TEACHING THEIR PRESCHOOLERS TO READ

Reprinted with permission of
Dr. Lee Mountain
by the
State of Florida
Department of Education
Tallahassee, Florida

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lee Mountain
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CS 002 199

How Parents are Teaching Their Preschoolers to Read

Lee Mountain

FIVE . . . FOUR . . . THREE . . . TWO . . . Perhaps this countdown makes you think of a launching from Cape Kennedy. Or perhaps it makes you think of an even more important kind of launching—launching your child into reading. Many a mother has discovered that she can help her child start to read at the age of five . . . four . . . three . . . two. 1

The idea of teaching the preschooler to read has been gaining popularity since the early 1960s. At the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia, Dolman (*4*) has claimed to have helped hundreds of parents teach their babies to read. Durkin (*5*) has indicated that the children she studied who learned to read before entering school maintained their advantage in school. The Denver Study showed long term benefits with no adverse side effects for children who started to read at the age of five (*2*). Educators who work with two- to four-year-olds have reported success in reading instruction with television teaching (*8*), the talking typewriter (*10*), programed instruction (*6*), and special nursery school materials (*9*). These methods, however, are somewhat dependent upon complicated equipment, so they are not ideal for home use by a parent.

Parents want reading instruction materials that are economical and easy to use. Parents also want to teach their preschoolers by a method that will tie in well with whatever approach the children will meet in first grade. However, there is a shortage of simple, economical, how-to-teach

information for parents of children who are ready to start reading at early ages (3). This shortage led me to work on developing some approaches that a parent could use to give his preschooler a headstart on reading.

For the past four years, some of my graduate students at the Rutgers University Reading Center have been working with me on methods and materials for teaching their own sons and daughters to read. We have tried simplifying some first grade methods for use at the preschool level (*1, 7*). We have also tried using some economical commercial materials with two- to five-year-olds (*11, 12*). We are presently working on other approaches.

The simplest and most economical method we have developed so far employs three materials: 1) word cards, 2) stories written by the parent, and 3) phonics games. With these materials, perhaps you and your child can have as much fun and success as the parents and children who used them at Rutgers University. If you want to try our approach, here is how you can offer your preschooler a headstart on reading.

Word Cards

2 For making word cards you need some unlined three-by-five cards and a black crayon or magic marker. Print the word *Mommy* on one of the cards, using a capital for the first letter only. Then staple strings to the card so that you can hang it around your neck. But before you put on your *Mommy* card, say to your child, "What do you call me?" Or ask another question that will get the response *Mommy*. Then say, "Yes, I am Mommy, and this is the word *Mommy*," as you put the card around your neck. Have your child look at the word, touch the card, and repeat *Mommy* after you.

Sometimes the child catches on so quickly that you never get a chance to wear the *Mommy* card. One graduate student reported this experience in teaching the word *Mommy* to her three-year-old son.

> This afternoon I read Mike's favorite book to him. Then I asked him if he would like to learn to read. He wanted to begin at once. As soon as I presented the *Mommy* card, he took it from me, walked away, and put it on his toy chest. Later, I rescued my card from his baby sister who was nibbling an edge of it. The next day I asked him to read the word on the card. He took one look and said, "Mommy." Later I printed *Mommy* on a smaller card in red ink. When I held it up, he said "Mommy." Wow!

Another graduate student reported a very different experience with her three-year-old daughter:

3

ILLUSTRATION 1

After two weeks of no success with the word *Mommy*, I switched my teaching tactics. I started playing phonics games with Amy. We would take turns thinking of words that started with the same sound. Then I showed her the letter *M* to match the sound *mmmmmmm*. Once she could match a few letters and sounds, everything seemed to fall into place. She learned *Mommy* easily, and she soon picked up a number of other words.

If you find yourself getting nowhere on the teaching of *Mommy* after a week or two of one-minute daily sessions, you might want to try phonics games instead. Or you might want to wait a while before going ahead with reading instruction. Since you have taught your child to talk and to use the toilet, you know from experience that your teaching doesn't always "take" on the first few tries. But if your teaching does "take," you

should soon remove the string from your *Mommy* card, stand it up on the table where your child will see it at each meal, and review it frequently.

Make a *Daddy* card for your husband. But before he starts wearing it, prepare your child for learning the word *Daddy*. Point out that you and your husband look different and that the words *Mommy* and *Daddy* look different, too.

Directing your child's attention to similarities is also helpful. For example, when introducing the *Daddy* card, one mother pointed out to her four-year-old, "The letter *D* has a fat tummy, and so does Daddy."

When your husband hangs the card around his neck, he should say, "This is the word *Daddy*." Have your child look at the card and repeat *Daddy*. Of course, both you and your husband will show how pleased you are when your child begins to learn the word. After he seems to know it, remove the string, put it on the table with the *Mommy* card, and review it frequently.

A child who has been able to learn the words *Mommy* and *Daddy* will have no trouble learning to read his own name. To teach your child to read his name, use a hand mirror with a card taped on it. Print his name on the card, using a capital for the first letter only. (Your child can't wear his name card like a necklace because he would then see the word upside down.) Hand him the mirror and say something to this effect: "You can see yourself in the mirror, and you see your name on the card." Have him point to the card and read his name. When your child no longer needs the mirror for a clue, review his name from the card alone. Label many of his belongings with his name and have him practice reading his name on his toys, clothes, and furniture.

After you have taught your child to read three nouns—*Mommy*, *Daddy*, and his own name—you need to introduce a verb so that he can read a few sentences. The verb *kisses* is a good one to start with since it has meaning and significance for a preschooler. Also it is handy for building sentences, such as *Daddy kisses Mommy*.

One of my graduate students reported instant success with this presentation of the word *kisses*.

> After I showed Stephen the *kisses* card and told him what it said, I scooped him up and planted millions of kisses on his cheeks, nose, eyes, ears, and neck. He never again had to be told what that word card said.

I observed that many two- and three-year-olds love to "practice" by rereading the words they already know. But some four- and five-year-olds are so eager to learn a lot of words rapidly that they need extra encouragement to practice the words they are learning.

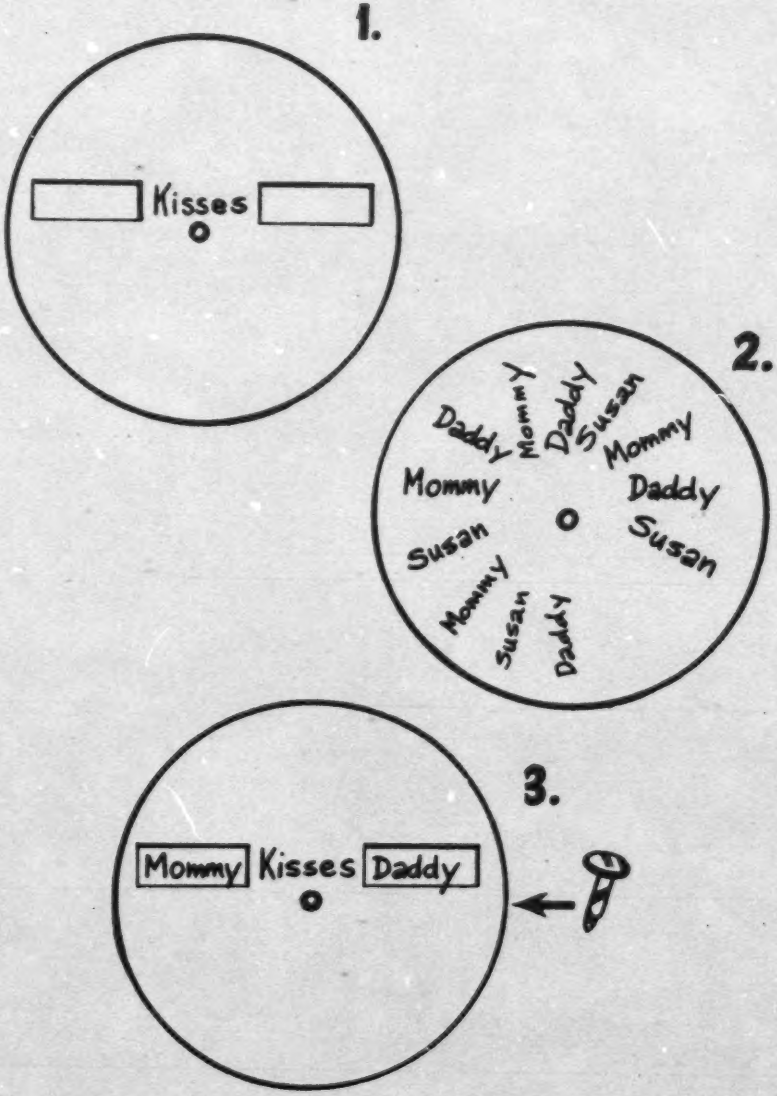


ILLUSTRATION 2

One mother of a five-year-old reported that her daughter, Susan, learned *Mommy, Daddy,* her own name, and *kisses* during her first ten-minute lesson. Susan then asked for more words. Because the mother wanted to provide some practice on the first four words, she and Susan constructed a sentence wheel with two circles of paper and a pronged clip.

When a preschooler knows his first four words and can read them in sentences with expression and comprehension, it is time to ask him what words he would like to learn next. Some preschoolers want more proper names, such as *Santa* and *Fido*. Others want action verbs like *jump* and *swim*. Your preschooler will have his own ideas about which words he wants in his early reading vocabulary. That is why you are the best author of reading material for your preschool child. You know which words your child wants to learn. You can teach him those words on word cards, and you can then write those words into stories for him to read.

Stories Written by the Parent

My graduate students found that they needed very few words to write stories about the everyday happenings in the lives of their children. Here, for example, is a four-sentence story told with only six different words: Jim hit Paul. Paul cried. Grandpa spanked Jim. Jim cried. While this story has something resembling a plot, such a characteristic is not really the sine qua non of a story for the typical three-year-old reader. My graduate students found that their three-year-olds were perfectly happy with plotless stories as long as the stories were about themselves. Parents turned out dozens of homemade storybooks about their children. Typical pages are illustrated below.

Mark's "book" is just a piece of paper folded in half. To make Kathy's "book," her father stapled together a few sheets of looseleaf notebook paper on which he had printed sentences and pasted snapshots. If you can draw even a stick figure, your child will love having you illustrate the books you write for him. But if drawing is not your forte, snapshots seem to be equally acceptable as illustrations for homemade books.

Of necessity, the typical parent-written story abounds in two types of words: 1) names of friends and relatives and 2) action verbs. These are the types of words that preschoolers are most interested in learning since these words are connected with their favorite people and activities.

To teach your child the names he wants to read, use the same word-card procedures you employed when teaching *Mommy* and *Daddy*. Capitalize each name, but use lower case printing for the other letters. Usually names of brothers, sisters, and playmates can be learned easily,

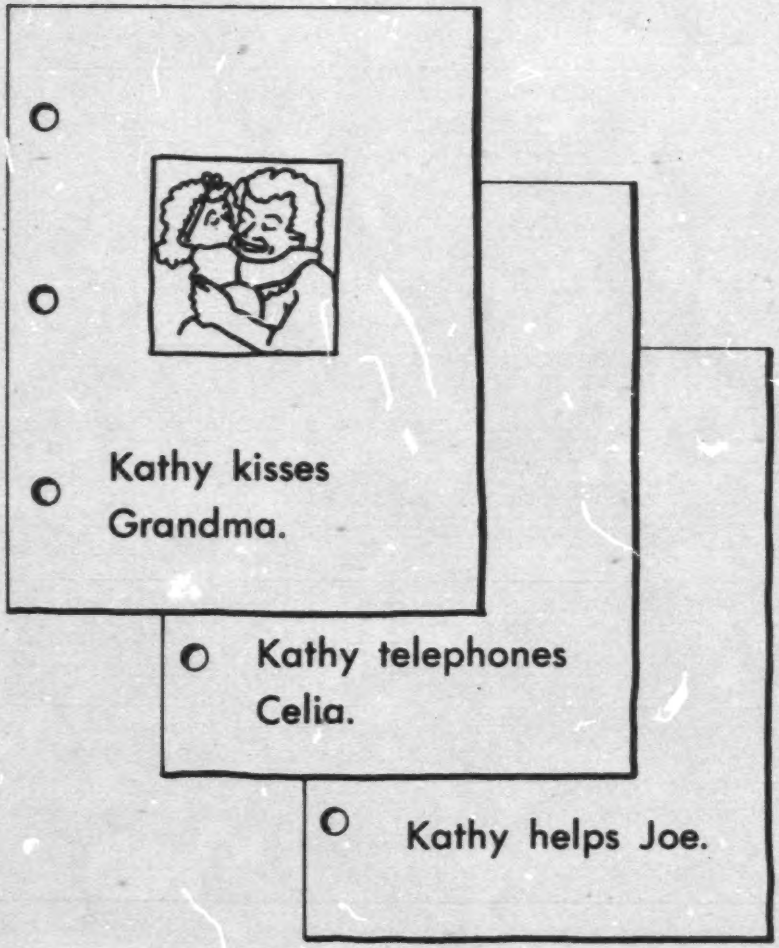
7

ILLUSTRATION 3

provided the words in print do not closely resemble one another. For example, because *Danny* can be confused with *Daddy*, it may be wise to avoid presenting *Danny* soon after *Daddy*. Try to teach names that look fairly different from one another, and teach only one new name at a time. Name card necklaces may be worn by sisters and brothers. Sometimes a snapshot on the name card helps your child learn to read the name of a relative.

To review the name cards, use activities such as having your child set up name cards at the table. Play school, letting your child pretend to call the roll from name cards of his friends. Print the names he knows on envelopes, and have him play mailman or delivery boy. Be careful to proceed at your child's own pace. One new name each week is plenty for some children. Others want to make a name card telephone directory by adding a new name every day.

You can teach the second type of word—the action verb—in much



8

ILLUSTRATION 4

the same way that you taught *kisses*. Just demonstrate and talk about the action, and make sure your child uses the word orally with ease. To review action words, hold up one card at a time and have your child perform the action.

Most two- and three-year-olds appear to be content reading books that contain *only* nouns and verbs, but some four- and five-year-olds want to move beyond noun and verb stories. They want to learn to read words like *up, under, is, will, he, I, so,* and *but*. Such words are not

so concrete and, therefore, not so easy to teach as nouns and action verbs. They are learned best through a combination of repetition and phonics. You can provide many repetitions of these words in the stories you write. And you can play phonics games with your child to build his awareness of sounds and letters so that he can eventually start to apply his knowledge of phonics to words that are hard for him to learn to read.

PHONICS GAMES

You can start to play sound games with your child at the same time that you start teaching him to recognize the word *Mommy*. You might say, "I'm thinking of a word that starts with the sound *mmmm*. Guess what it is." If your child doesn't understand what you want, tell him that *MMMMMommy* starts with the sound *mmmm*. Or you might tell your child, "I see two things in the yard that begin (or end) with the sound *mmmmm*. What are they?" Another approach would be to ask your child, "What sound do you hear at the beginning of the words *saw*, *see*, and *Sue*?"

These games will help your child become aware of sounds. For reading he needs to connect a sound with a letter. So show him the *Mommy* card again, point to the capital *M*, and say, "This letter stands for the sound *mmmmm*. The word *Mommy* starts with *mmmmm*." Have him repeat *mmmmm* after you. After he has made the connection between the sound *mmmmm* and the letter *M*, use the same procedure to teach the sounds of other letters.

One mother that I worked with developed an interesting "kitchen approach" to phonics. She decided that the way to her child's brain was through his stomach. So she baked batch after batch of alphabet cookies. If he knew the sound, he could eat the letter. He became proficient at phonics very rapidly.

Some commercial games are handy for phonics instruction. With *Scrabble for Juniors* you can give your child practice in recognizing and matching letters and producing their sounds.

Once your child knows a few letters and sounds, he can profit from playing *Word Roll*. In this game your child throws a pair of dice such as those shown in the following illustration and then attempts to sound out the word on the upper faces.

Most of my graduate students used phonics games along with word cards and homemade storybooks when teaching their children to read. After you have taught your child his first few words, you will find yourself using all three materials—word cards, stories you have written, and phonics games—in your at-home teaching session.

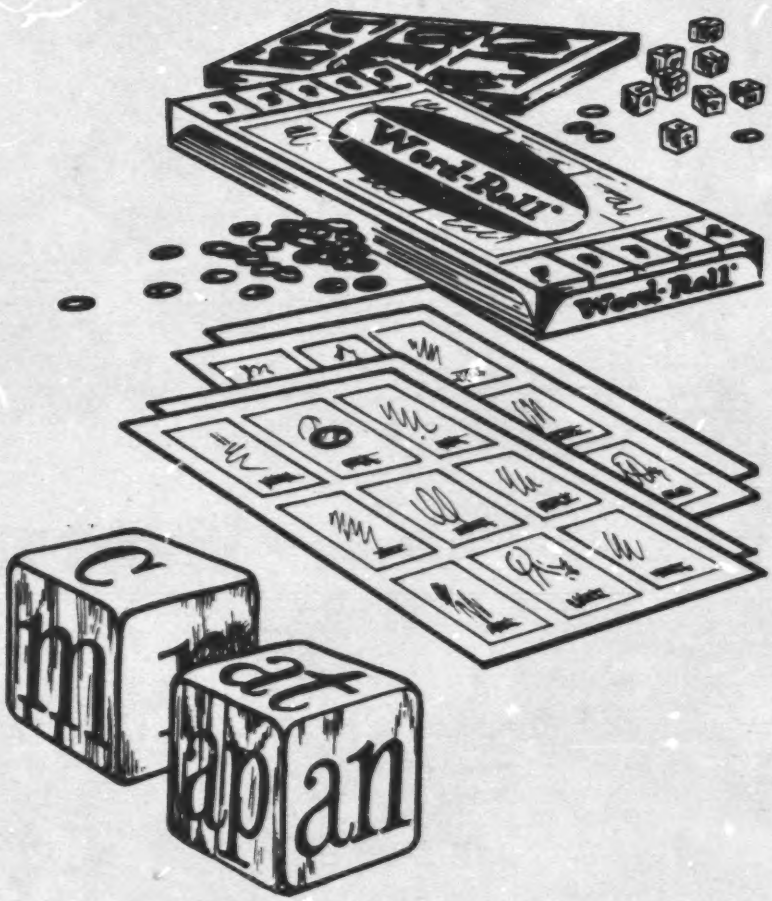


ILLUSTRATION 5

With phonics games, as with the other teaching materials, you should go only as far as your child wants to go. If he enjoys phonics games, play them frequently. If sounds and letters seem too abstract for him, stop, wait a few months, and try again.

With just these three simple materials—word cards, homemade books, and phonics games—many parents have been able to help their preschoolers start to read. Maybe you can do as much for your child when he is five . . . four . . . three . . . two. If you decide to try, here's wishing you, "Happy teaching!"

References

1. Ashton-Warner, Sylvia. *Teacher*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.
2. Brzeinski, J. "Beginning Reading in Denver," *Reading Teacher*, 18 (1964), 16-21.
3. Della-Piana, G., R. F. Stahmann, and J. E. Allen. "Parents and Reading Achievement: A Review of Research," *Elementary English*, 45 (1968), 190-200.
4. Doman, Glenn. *How to Teach Your Baby to Read*. New York: Random House, 1964.
5. Durkin, Dolores. *Children Who Read Early: Two Longitudinal Studies*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1966, 133.
6. Fowler, W. "A Study of Process and Method in Three-Year-Old Twins and Triplets Learning to Read," *Genetic Psychology Monograph*, 72 (1965), 3-89.
7. Harris, Albert J. *How to Increase Reading Ability*. New York: David McKay, 1961.
8. Harvey, Neil. "Once It Was Believed," *Reading Newsreport*, 3 (November 1968), 25.
9. Montessori, M. *The Montessori Method*. Cambridge: Robert Bentley, 1964.
10. Moore, O., and A. Anderson. *The Response Environment Project Current Theory and Practice*. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.
11. *Scrabble for Juniors*. New York: Selchow and Righter, 1958.
12. *Word Roll Game*. Indianapolis: Teaching Aids, 1969.